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1819E

T348

THINGS AS THEY ARE;

OR,

A M E R I C A

IN 1819.

BY AN EMIGRANT,

Just returned to England.

MANCHESTER :

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1819.

THINGS AS THEY ARE, &c.

AT the present awful crisis, when the inevitable concomitants of Tyranny and Despotism, Misery and Want, are with ruthless hand driving thousands of their hapless victims to seek for that subsistence in a foreign clime which they can no longer obtain in the land of their nativity;—it would be well for those who have formed the intention of emigrating to America, under an idea of saving what little is left to them by an upstart merciless junta, (who under a pretext of governing the people, draw from them the hard earned fruits of their industry, with a rapacity not exceeded by the fabled Vampyre in its thirst after blood) to pause, and after having obtained what information they can upon the subject, seriously to consider the matter before they take so important a step.

The writer of this pamphlet is no timid alarmist—though an Englishman and a lover of the land that gave him birth, he would for ever renounce his country if he thought it enslaved beyond the power of redemption;—"where liberty is, there is my country!" and I doubt not, but ere long my country will be the land of liberty. Love of liberty, and hatred of slavery, are indelibly implanted in the human mind—and past experience has shewn us, that there is no sacrifice too great for men to make, to obtain the one, and free themselves from the other; life without liberty is not worth possessing, and,

Were Paradise itself my prison

Still would I long to leap the crystal walls.

Discontent, wretchedness, and want, amongst the people, are the inevitable consequences of corruption and despotism in the rulers; while happiness and content in a nation are certain marks of

equitable laws, and of a wise and just government.

The truth of these axioms is evident, and ought to be had in lasting remembrance by every Englishman ; but nevertheless embarrassment and distress *may for a time* exist in a country under a good government ; and though under the guidance of wise rulers, and possessing just and equitable laws, it may possess many local disadvantages ; how far these remarks will apply to the United States of America, thousands of our poor expatriated countrymen, who are now lamenting in hopeless agony that ever they crossed the Atlantic for the shores of America can fully determine ; they can give a decided affirmative to them ; and could tell their fellow countrymen what additional cause they have to curse and execrate the self-elected tyrants, whom the British people, in a fit of cowardly apathy, have in a dastardly manner, suffered to trample on the sacred rights of man ; and reduced them to a worse than Egyptian bondage.

The United States of America are unquestionably governed by just and equal laws, administered wisely and impartially, by reason of which the Americans enjoy more of political, civil, and religious liberty, than any other people in the world ; the just reward of that noble spirit, which animated them to throw off the yoke of despots, and assert their inalienable rights ; at once a proud example and a reproach to Europe ; teaching, “that for men to love liberty it is sufficient that they know it ; that for a nation to be free, it is sufficient that they will it”.

Although good government and wise laws are indispensably requisite to the happiness of a people, it is quite possible, and is very frequently the case, that from political changes and a variety of events which the womb of time keeps continually producing ; they may be reduced from a state

of prosperity to difficulty and distress. As a striking proof of the truth of this assertion, let us look at the United States of America, which, during the last thirty years has trebled its population; has acquired a commercial navy which can vie with any in the world, and has arisen to a considerable degree of opulence; but which is at present in a dreadful labyrinth of commercial embarrassment; and general distress; originating however from very different causes to which the embarrassment and distresses under which the English nation are now groaning, are to be attributed.

It is highly necessary that this distinction should not be lost sight of; for I am well aware that the harpies of despotism will catch at the distress which exists in America, with as much pleasure and avidity as an attorney at a commission of bankruptcy, or Castlereagh and Co. at a plot, and that they will endeavour, by sophistry and lies, to persuade the people of England, that the distress and misery which they labour under is only temporary and of a local nature---that it is not the effect of bloody and unnecessary wars---of profligate expenditure of the public money to pensioners and boroughmongers, to bribe them to vote supplies---and in paying an immense standing army to collect the taxes thus illegally imposed at the point of the bayonet. I know they will endeavour to persuade the people, that their distress does not originate in these things. Oh! no, say they; look at America, your boasted land of liberty, where they have no king nor any taxes---she is as much distressed as you are;---but it is now too late to preach up this doctrine, nor will the people of England believe it;---no, no, oppression and misery they have been long too intimately acquainted with, so that they know all about it, and are not to be duped in such a manner.

It is much to be regretted, that men eminent for talent and ability, who have gone from England to

America, have not taken upon themselves the trouble of giving to the British public a fair and impartial account of the United States; instead of this, there have been publications describing America in a very partial light; the writers of which, generally, have left this country predetermined to like America; and as they have previous to their departure been loud in its praise, they have determined not to express their disappointment when they arrived there, for fear, perhaps, of the railery of their friends;---many of these writers have acted like a courtier at a levee, or a sycophant in the closet of a Prince; because they found a good government, they could not see any defects in the country or its climate, but with one dash of the pen made it into a paradise; because the laws were equitable and just, they have deceived people into a belief, that the Americans themselves were equitable and just also; because they found very little expence on the part of the government, and government in possession of ample funds to meet the expenditure with very little taxation, they took it for granted that the Americans were equally economical and abounded with money; the very reverse of which is a fact.

Far be it from me to arraign the *motives* of those who have thus written, or to suppose they were actuated by a wish to deceive; they have given a statement of their own success in the particular sphere in which they have themselves moved, without (in many instances) once looking out of it. A person has done well in his own pursuits of life, (he writes his friends to that effect) and for ought he knows or cares, every one else may be doing the same. Mr. Cobbett has come in for more than a common share of blame on this subject, and his conduct has been strongly denounced; but there are many men when they have entered into speculations which have turned out unsuccessful, instead of placing their disappointment to their

own want of prudence and *fore-thought*, are weak enough to try to shuffle it off themselves, and lay it upon any one next them---without suspecting Mr. Cobbett of any improper motives, I must say, that, by his writings, he has been the cause of thousands of individuals emigrating to America, who will regret to the day of their death that ever they did so. Mr. Cobbett is a man of superior talents, he is a man much looked up to by the people of England, they know him competent to give them the best of information, they expected it from him, and they had a right to do so---they are disappointed; and though, perhaps, Mr. Cobbett is not deserving of reprobation, for misrepresenting the state of America, at the different periods in which he wrote, he has certainly recently withheld much important information respecting it, which, in consequence of the great declension of American commerce, and the magnitude of emigration from Britain to America during the last two years, many people are of opinion that Mr. Cobbett ought to have published.

But of all writers on the subject of emigration to America, Mr. Birkbeck's publications have done the most mischief. I can allow for the warmth of feeling in a man, who after having had a flattering account given him of a place, and who, in the warmth of imagination, has added a number of ideal beauties of his own, when he finds himself deceived and completely disappointed; he will give way to the irritation of his mind, and, in the heat of his resentment, impute motives to the person by whom he has been deceived that do not in justice belong to him. Hence it is that the name of Mr. Birkbeck is execrated by hundreds of emigrants, who have unfortunately been deceived by his writings---though I have no doubt, but Mr. B. has equally deceived himself. But it must be admitted, that this is no consolation to hundreds of individuals, who, after struggling for years to support a family,

have been compelled, by the iron hand of oppression, to break up their little establishments, which was severing the link that bound them to every thing near and dear to them, vainly to seek that comfort in America which the delusive accounts of Mr. Birkbeck had given them reason to hope were to be found ;---some of them have left the cottage in which they first drew breath, and in which the days of childhood and of boyish pleasure were passed, and which, in their exile, often recalls to them the recollection of enjoyments and fond endearments, experienced by them in happier days, but now, alas! departed, never to return; perhaps have left a father or a mother, infirm and destitute, to hasten to a premature grave, perhaps to end their days in a work-house; many have parted with their relatives and friends never to see them more, in fact, have torn asunder every earthly tie to begin the world anew, and to endeavour to procure a subsistence amid the wilds and forests of America, exchanging the social intercourse of relatives and neighbours, for the solemn, gloomy monotony of a boundless wilderness;---and the temperate salubrious climate of Great Britain, for a pestilential atmosphere, the standard heat of which in the Northern and Western States, in summer, is by Fahrenheit's thermometer, from 84 to 96 degrees, and the cold in winter is so intense, that the thermometer is several degrees below Zero; extremes never known in this country, and which prove so fatal to British constitutions, that during the last summer, hundreds who were in health in the morning, have been *interred* before night, and in New York, Baltimore, and other cities in the Union, a dozen people have been known to drop down dead in the streets in one day, occasioned principally by drinking cold water at the pump when overheated, which is not at all surprising, for during the past summer, the thermometer has stood in the shade frequently as high as 102 and 104 degrees.

As a proof that Mr. Birkbeck has not realized the golden hopes he anticipated, I am acquainted with a young man, a native of Derbyshire, who, among many others, charmed with the flattering prospect held out by Mr. B. left England and proceeded to join him upon his tract of land in the Illionois territory, which after enduring great privations (in travelling through forests impervious to the sun's rays, and uninhabited, save by bears, wolves, serpents, &c.; without food, except sometimes, after 40 hours fasting, a squirrel, which he had no means of cooking, and no guide but a pocket compass) he at length reached in the last week in February, 1819, expecting to find that Mr. B. had carried into effect the improvements upon his land, which he proposed in his celebrated letters from the Illionois, published in 1817, and that he had realized the profits which he had so confidently anticipated in the same letters; but to his disappointment and surprize, he found that instead of 100 acres of land that *were to be* planted with Indian corn in 1818, and then to be put into wheat in 1819, and another 100 acres again into corn, that he had only broke up 40 acres on the whole tract; that he had not planted a single rood with any thing, and that he had not a fruit tree upon it; Mr. B. was confused at the interrogatories put to him, and said that *he had been disappointed!*—thus after having travelled upwards of five thousand miles in search of a farm, my acquaintance was glad to remeasure his steps back again into Derbyshire, without taking one, and he has left hundreds behind him who would be glad to do the same if they could.

Since the commencement of the French Revolution, and the increase of taxes attendant upon the sanguinary wars which followed that event, for the purpose of reinstating the Bourbons upon the throne of France, and extinguishing the light of truth which that memorable event had shed upon the political horizon of England, the burthens and

privations of the people have kept rapidly increasing, and have caused during the last 25 years, a tide of emigration to the United States, unprecedented in the annals of history. During the early part of this period, when the influx of commerce into the ports of America in consequence of the war, was so astonishing, and the population of the country so thin, that emigration was a great acquisition both of strength, wealth and talent, and the emigrant found no difficulty in obtaining a much more easy subsistence there than in England; for while the powers of Europe were in league against France, with a view to restore tyranny and the divine rights of Kings, the wise and politic government of America remained neutral, and like the fox in the fable, while the lion and the tiger were contending for the prey, ran off with it; while Great Britain was exhausting her finances and injuring her commerce; America was gathering strength like a giant, and a commercial navy, surpassed by none in the world, covered the face of the ocean with the rapidity of magic; the commerce of the world was conveyed into her ports and from thence found its way to every part of Europe; during this contention America became the carriers of the world, and France for 25 years had millions of capital floating upon American bottoms protected by their *neutral* flag, and bidding defiance to the boasted navy of England.

This amazing influx of commerce into the United States found employment for all classes of people; no matter how many emigrants arrived, when a ship came in from Europe, tradesmen of all descriptions flocked on board to enquire for hands; all kinds of labour were well paid; a porter on the wharfs could get two dollars per day; the farmers and planters too, were reaping a rich harvest; flour, rice, tobacco, and all kinds of produce were sold at enormous prices; in fact, France, was actually subsisted by America during her revolutionary war with England and her allies, and during the war which England

carried on in Spain and Portugal, the purchases of flour &c. by the British Government from the United States, were to a very large amount.

It is not then so much to be wondered at that during this state of European warfare, with all these advantages on her side, that America should start as it were into greatness all of a sudden, nor is it at all surprising that with such a commerce, and with such ample means of providing employment, that such numbers of emigrants should flock over and do well in the United States. But it is often with nations as with individuals; prosperity is too frequently productive of evil to them; this flourishing state of things has been productive of luxury and dissipation to an enormous extent; and by exciting the cupidity of many, it led to a most enormous and daring stretch of speculation amongst the mercantile part of the community, which has produced and encouraged an issue of paper money in America, which, considering her means, is not to be equalled, no, not by all the bankers in England, with the shop in Threadneedle-street at their head; America is now suffering severely on account of this amongst other causes, and she is not yet at the worst.

The French revolution has been productive of events the most astonishing. America owed her sudden aggrandizement to that event, it was one of those fortunate circumstances which the chapter of accidents turned up for her; her prosperity continued as long as Bonaparte retained his power, but the battle of Waterloo gave a death blow at once to Bonaparte and the commerce of the United States; no sooner was legitimacy restored, and Louis the desired placed on the throne of France, than the channels of American commerce were dried up and fresh ones opened—instead of France employing American vessels and American seamen she sent out her own vessels and her own men; the Dutch have done the same, and every other maritime power in Europe.

America has also lost another profitable source of traffic in the direct communication existing between England and the Continent of Europe:—during the prohibitory decrees of Bonaparte, articles of British manufacture, we were obliged to be first sent out to America, and from thence re-exported to Europe, by which the Americans made a considerable profit independent of finding employment for her shipping and seamen.

In consequence of this new order of things, America has lost the greater part of her commerce, nor is it very probable that she will ever regain it; it arose out of peculiar circumstances, and was by no means a natural state of things; when taken in a national point of view it was only a sort of mushroom greatness; quick in its growth, but of short duration; from the very nature of things America must be an agricultural rather than a manufacturing or commercial country; she *must* build fewer ships and cultivate more small farms for the employment of the excess of her population, which the tide of events by depriving her of her commerce has thrown idle upon her hands; she must lay aside the luxury and dissipation which prosperity has introduced, and adopt a system of economy; had there been no increase of population in America since 1813, she could not have found employment at this time for the numbers she then had; is it to be wondered at that there should be great distress when it is computed that since 1813 there has been an increase of population to the amount of two millions of souls, and it is a fact that upwards of eleven hundred emigrants landed in three days in the port of Philadelphia alone in the month of July last; and there are numbers of hands who are, and have been, during the past summer working on the roads for 12½ Cents per day, (about 7d. sterling) under a burning sun, the thermometer sometimes as high as 102 degrees.

Those who are lucky enough to find employment in half a dozen cases out of ten, cannot get their

wages when they have earned them; but sometimes lose the whole of what they have been labouring for months; some rather than lose all take goods and hawk them about for sale, and are almost always obliged to sell them to loss; this is the case in all trades, cabinet-makers, tailors, shoe-makers, &c. are all in the same predicament.

The price paid by mechanics for board and lodging is from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 dollars per week or from 15s. 9d. to 18s. sterling, I know of none lower. Provisions are somewhat cheaper than in England, but house rent is universally above twice as dear; and fire-wood full four times as high in price as coals are in Lancashire. spirits, tea, tobacco, &c. are not one fifth the price they are here, but this is rather a disadvantage than a benefit from the immoderate use that is made of them.

The currency of the United States is at this moment the most depreciated of any in the world. specie you seldom see; all is paper, in notes of one, two, three, five, &c. dollars, and the swarms of banks and bill brokers is truly amazing; I have myself now in my possession a note for $6\frac{1}{2}$ cents, (about three-pence sterling) which I took in change for postage at the Baltimore Post Office in the month of March last, which notes are regularly issued.

I here subjoin a table of discounts on bank notes taken from the Baltimore American of the 17th of August, 1819.

RATES OF DISCOUNT.

Bank of the United States and branches	Par.
Banks in the State of Massachusetts, from	- - 2 to 6 per cent.
Do do Connecticut	- - - - 5
Do do New York	- - - - $2\frac{1}{2}$ 15
	New York, City Banks Par.
	New York, Exchange Bank 35
Do do Delaware	- - - - $1\frac{1}{2}$ 10
	Laurel Bank, Delaware - 60

Banks in the district of Columbia, viz. Wash-				1	per cent
ington, Georgetown, &c. - - - - -				20	
Mechanics Bank at Alexandria - - - - -				60	
Franklin do do - - - - -				2	10
Banks in the state of Virginia - - - - -				5	6
Do do South Carolina - - - - -				7	8
Do do Georgia - - - - -				10	25
Do do Kentucky and Tennessee - - - - -				Ohio 10, 20, 25, 40 and 50 per cent.	
Do do Ohio - - - - -					

Here is a pretty statement ; this is a depreciated currency with a witness ; it is quite unnecessary to say any thing farther upon the state of America, the above list speaks volumes ; here are the fruits of the greedy and ruinous speculations entered into during the French war, to satisfy the cravings of rapacious avarice, and to pamper swollen up pride and dissipation.

The reader will perceive, by the above list, that the notes of the Exchange Bank of New York, are at a discount of 35 per cent. ; (that is, you may receive 65 cents instead of 100, the number of cents contained in a dollar, for which amount the notes are drawn ;) this said Bank is kept by a man of the name of Jacob Barker, who, notwithstanding the insolvent state of his Bank, has the impudence to offer himself as a candidate to represent the state in the legislature !

With regard to the manners and dispositions of the Americans, I shall say but little, for I cannot say much to their advantage ; the following quotation from the pen of the able biographer of Dr. Priestley, though a severe, is yet but too correct a picture. He says, “ America it is true has produced a Franklin, but undoubtedly that philosopher acquired much of his knowledge in Europe ; and if we may judge of the intellects of his countrymen by their literary productions, they are the most phlegmatic people upon earth ; in the little arts of cunning and commercial address, however, they are more than a match for even European Jews”.

The Americans are indolent in the extreme ;

they read but little, and are consequently ignorant and ill-informed, except upon quibbling points of law, in which they are continually engaged with each other ; there are more pettyfogging lawyers in the United States of America, than in any other country in the world ; towards England and Englishmen they bear the most deep rooted antipathy, which even finds its way into their courts of law, as too many Englishmen can fully testify ; but they are in some measure excusable on this head, when the conduct of the British Government towards them is taken into consideration.

The present overburthened state of population in all the cities throughout the Union, has already produced great distress, and in consequence of the depreciated state of the currency which is daily getting worse ; the great number of failures amongst the banks, which rapidly decreases the quantity of the circulating medium ; I am decidedly of opinion, that the distress experienced in 1816 and 1817 in England, will be surpassed in America the ensuing winter ; in August last, in New York alone, there were 500 shoe-makers out of employ, and an equal proportion of hands in almost every other branch of business ; what is to become of them in a country where there are no poor laws ; and where, during a 5 months' winter, the thermometer is several degrees below Zero for weeks together, an extremity of cold never known in this country, and where fuel is excessively dear, God only knows ;—as many as can get back to England, although they know that they are quitting starvation, to encounter misery and oppression, are coming over again.

The ship *Magnet* of and from New York (in which the writer of this was a passenger) which arrived in Liverpool, on the 27th of September, brought back 164 British emigrants, a pretty striking proof of the situation of America.

No man knows what England is till he has been

out of it ; it is without question, the loveliest spot on the face of the earth ; and shall this far famed Isle of Albion, so long renowned for all that is virtuous, patriotic and noble, be the inheritance of pusillanimous cowards, and dastardly slaves ? shall it become a den of monsters, despots and tyrants ? rather let the lightnings of Heaven sever it from this globe, and hurl it into everlasting chaos ;—Shade of Hampden, spirit of Sidney, oh ! avert it ; let not the land which has drank of your precious blood, ever be pressed but by the footsteps of freemen ; let it ever be the happy home of the brave and the free, and the everlasting tomb of tyrants and despots—to those of my countrymen who may have formed the resolution of emigrating from it : I would say, “ they know not what they do,”—a nobler duty calls upon you to stay and join heart and hand, firmly determined to enjoy the rights, the inalienable everlasting rights of Men, which in consequence of your shameful, guilty apathy, a few insignificant despots who are but pigmies in strength, though giants in guilt, are withholding from you ;—you have the richest prize to contend for, that the world can afford, or that a beneficent God can give. The highly favoured island of Albion, and that island free ; for such a prize, he that will not contend to life’s last gasp, deserves to live the veriest slave alive ; the execrations of all good men will for ever attend him ; and the curse of his children’s children will rest upon his memory.---Britons, be temperate but firm, and you will soon enjoy much more comfortable homes, and happier firesides in your native land, than any you can go in quest of---your country wants your assistance, it would be cowardly to run away.

Manchester, 16th October, 1819.